

## **Skin and body rehabilitation after baby**

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The birth of your new baby is a joyous and celebrated event...that's the good news. The bad news is...just about every facet of a new mom's self image is affected by this life-changing event. A few of the common skin and body changes that women complain about are: uneven pigmentation of the face (melasma or otherwise known as "mask of pregnancy"), dull or sallow skin complexion, spider veins, stretchmarks on the abdomen, hips and buttocks, and stubborn fatty areas on the tummy and hips.

Pregnancy and fluctuating hormones can cause significant changes in your skin that are best dealt with after your baby is born. Melasma is one unfortunate disorder that presents itself in the form of dark irregular sized patches commonly found on the cheeks, the forehead, and the upper lip. For most forms of melasma, women can undergo chemical peels in their physician's offices or use at home skincare in combination. An excellent sunscreen will help to prevent melasma from returning once the discolourations have been corrected. Zinc oxide in concentrations of 15% and higher provides effective protection up to the longest wavelengths of UVA and is non-irritating. It is the same ingredient used to calm your baby's diaper rash but is fortunately available in formulas where it can be applied transparently for mom. For pigment correction, we recommend our patients use an Emblica based pigment cream for lightening any discolourations. Emblica is a traditional ingredient, borrowed from the Ayurvedic practice, that is a safe alternative to Hydroquinone. They can combine it with either a prescription Vitamin A or Alpha Hydroxy Acid based product after they have finished breastfeeding. While breastfeeding, turmericbased creams provide excellent skin brightening and anti-aging benefits. We also perform inoffice oxygenating masks to help moms wake up sluggish skin and get glowing complexions but again only after mothers have finished breastfeeding.

Stretchmarks occur when the skin is distended or stretched beyond the elastic capacity of the dermis or deeper skin layers. A rapidly growing belly and weight gain during pregnancy can result in stretchmarks that first appear pink or red in colour, then typically fade to a white or silvery colour. Stretchmarks can also have a crinkled texture from loss of collagen. Unfortunately there are no miracle creams that actually prevent stretchmarks from occurring. Treatments to improve the colour and texture of stretchmarks might include prescription retinoid creams, micro-

needling, or laser treatments. Spider veins on the face or body can also appear for many women as a result of increased pressure on the circulatory system during pregnancy, and also from pushing during labour.

A pregnant woman's body naturally stores more fat in areas such as the hips, buttocks and abdomen as energy reserves for after the baby is born. Breastfeeding requires a lot of calorie expenditure so biology has destined new moms to have some disproportionate fatty areas. A lucky few lose the weight evenly during breastfeeding and/or weight loss program afterwards. A common complaint that most women have is that despite weight loss they cannot get rid of that soft pouchy belly, saddlebags and "muffin-top". The VelaShape is a device which is FDA-cleared to help recontour these areas and reduce the appearance of cellulite. The VelaShape uses infrared light, radiofrequency heat, vacuum pressure and massage to help recontour and firm or tighten target areas. Clinical trials have been done on post-partum patients with the VelaShape and resulted in the launch of a North American campaign called "Body-After-Baby." The acclaimed treatment program has been featured on Rachel Ray and the Dr Phil shows. While individual response to treatment varies, appropriate candidates for VelaShape see measurable improvement in waist and hip circumference and improved cellulite in treated areas.

*Healthy lifestyle, preventative medicine and skincare practices, and knowledge go a long way to improving and preserving healthy skin.*

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